Technology in Rural Transportation

A recent study documented more than eighty proven, cost-effective, "low-tech" solutions to rural transportation needs, most developed or implemented by local transportation professionals. One of these solutions is outlined below:

Learn all about the simple solutions on the Internet at http://inform.enterprise.prog.org

The simple solutions report is available from Hau To at (503) 892-2533, or email: to@crc-corp.com

Portable Speed Detection

Overall goal:	To slow drivers in residential areas.
Technical approach:	The system uses a photo radar device installed in a mobile unit and operated by a specially trained staff person. The device photographs the drivers and license plates and records the speed of vehicles. Offenders are then contacted by mail. Citations become official when the offender submits an inquiry for citation. Signs in the town are posted on streets warning motorists of the use of the radar device.
Current status:	One mobile radar device is in use.
Location / geographic scope:	In San Jose, the system is being used exclusively on low volume, low speed roads (25 to 30 mph speed limits) in neighborhoods that have requested the speed monitoring. The system could be deployed in any community with a need for speed monitoring.
Agencies involved:	San Jose Traffic Engineering Office
Cost information:	Approximate estimates for the cost of the system, including the vehicle, hardware, and software are around $100,000 plus the employment of a trained staff person. Digital technology is still a pilot project with most companies right now because of investments in "wet-film" technology, but the digital technology is becoming more versatile. This may be somewhat expensive for a system like this, but there are many long term benefits:

- Police stations do not have the manpower to enforce speed limits in all residential neighborhoods, but the photo radar device can be used

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to respond to those requests and police resources can be used for more important matters.

- Since all correspondence is done by mail, more citations can be processed due to the time savings of not having to issue a citation at the time of the violation.

Key contacts:

James Helmer, San Jose Traffic Engineering Office. (408) 277-4304
Larry Moore, San Jose Traffic Engineering Office. (408) 277-3072

Have goals been achieved?

Expectations of the system have been exceeded. Studies have shown that maximum speeds have dropped to the speed limit in residential neighborhoods. It has also been shown that the system has a residual effect of at least 9 months after the unit has been used in the area, versus 2 to 3 weeks when a police officer has been assigned to enforce speed limits in the area. Finally, residents have a better response time to enforcement of speed limits in their neighborhoods.

Solution timeline:

The system has been so effective in deterring speed violations on residential streets that the City of San Jose City Council is considering purchasing another unit. Because of police union concerns for jobs, the units are only allowed to operate in low-priority enforcement situations.

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